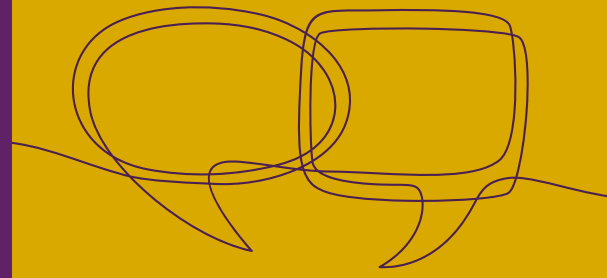




ENoP Democracy Dialogues I: The Future of Political Party Cooperation: Needs, Benefits, Challenges and Opportunities



OVERVIEW

Political parties are one of the key organisations for citizens to organise their political participation and representation. As such, political party support is identified as a crucial element of Democracy Promotion in Partner Country Cooperation Programmes of the EU. During the last few decades, EU institutions have developed numerous documents and guidelines on the effective promotion of human rights in third countries. Still, clear policies and guidelines for political party cooperation as part of effective democracy promotion do not yet exist.

However, EU engagement in political party cooperation offers ample opportunities for the promotion of constructive partnerships in thematic areas such as peace and security, climate change and disaster prevention, and migration management. Through political party cooperation programmes, the EU and European stakeholders may develop trusting and supportive relationships with future political leaders, independent from the ruling government and any political changes. If organised in a systematic and carefully differentiated way, engagement in political party cooperation can add a highly effective new dimension of sustainable partnerships to the foreign policy of the EU.

The first ENoP Democracy Dialogue with the Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, on the role of political party cooperation in democracy support, was held on 28 March 2022. Panellists included Helena Bjuremalm, Deputy Head of Democracy Unit, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency - SIDA, Mario Voigt, Parliamentary Group Leader of the CDU/CSU in the Thuringian State Parliament, and Jan Marinus Wiersma, ENoP Political Board Member & Former Member of the European Parliament. Following the discussion, Wilhelm Hofmeister, Expert & Lead Author of ENoP's Upcoming Study on Political Party Cooperation, shared recommendations on the topic.

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM THE DISCUSSION

The following recommendations emerged as takeaways from the dialogue:

- To achieve effective democracy support, it is crucial to engage in carefully differentiated cooperation with political parties, depending on the general political situation of a partner country and the relationships between domestic political parties.
- The effective support of inclusive and representative democracies in third countries should be the general objective of a fundamental document on the engagement of the EU in political party cooperation. Such a document should provide the following:
 - (1) An orientation for EU delegations on when and how to engage in political party cooperation in different countries.
 - (2) The provision and encouragement of strategies for European and partner country stakeholders interested in engaging in activities within the framework of EU political party cooperation.
 - (3) Documentation of practice examples of successful and less successful cooperation approaches with political parties.
- The EU should further invest in its relations, i.e. nurture relations with future political leaders and engage with them to develop and shape their understanding of policies.
- Engaging more strategically in political party cooperation would offer ample opportunities for the European Commission to develop constructive partnerships in areas such as peace and security, climate change and disaster prevention, human rights, and democracy strengthening.

- Through political foundations, political party cooperation programmes can emerge as tools, with which both the EU and its stakeholders can develop trusting partnerships and cooperation with future political leaders in third countries.
- Considering that democracy is under threat globally and that strengthening inclusivity and fighting polarisation is now more important than ever, research and reporting done in the area of democracy support would be incomplete without also examining the role of political party cooperation and the work of political foundations in democracy support.
- Since political parties are fundamental institutions for political participation, democratic representation and decision-making processes, the role of political foundations is instrumental in developing capacity building, training and peer exchange programmes, which will strengthen internal democracy, organisational development, inclusiveness and the political accountability of the political parties and societies in which they are active.
- The cross-ideological, multi-party approach combined with peer-to-peer approaches nurtured within ENoP is ensured through exclusive cooperation with political parties that have democratic values, inclusiveness and good governance at their core.
- This approach creates trust between democratic actors and shareholders and brings them together in activities related to strengthening intra-party democracy, policy negotiations, and the transparency of political processes.
- The inclusiveness of under-represented groups, especially women and youth, should permeate political party cooperation strategies in ways that not only aim for statistical goals, but also focus on capacity building, involvement in decision-making processes and party practices, and ultimately strengthen the political influence of women and youth, as well as other marginalised groups.
- Although working with civil society representatives is of the utmost importance for democracy support, the discrepancy between civil society and political party cooperation, when it comes to the attention and funds given, is too large and should be reduced.
- The aforementioned would lead to complementary and effective approaches with the same goal of democracy support, and have political foundations act as a medium for political party cooperation, political exchange and ensure political influence for women and young activists through peer-to-peer and cross-party programmes.

ABOUT ENoP

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) serves as a platform for dialogue and exchange between the European political foundations, civil society organisations, active in the fields of democracy support and sustainable development, and the institutions of the European Union.

ENoP brings together 55 member foundations from 22 EU Member States and the United Kingdom. The members are affiliated to 6 political party families represented in the European Parliament, namely: ECR, EPP, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, Renew Europe and S&D. Our members are active in over 100 countries around the world, where they bring civic education, support democratic processes and sustainable development through work with civil society and political actors.

In 2016, ENoP has signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission, acknowledging the important role of the Network in the fields of development cooperation and democracy support. This FPA marks a set of common objectives of a Strategic Partnership to:



Promote an enabling environment for political foundations, civil society and political parties;



Encourage participation in policy-making processes through political foundations, their partner organizations and political parties;



Strengthen the capabilities of political foundations in promoting democracy and developing pluralistic societies.

ENoP

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**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This publication was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the European Network of Political Foundations and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.